

Navy Department
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
Division of Naval History (Op-29)
Ship's Histories Section

HISTORY OF USS HARTFORD

The HARTFORD was a steam sloop-of-war launched at the Boston Navy Yard on 22 November 1858. She was named in honor of Hartford, Connecticut. Her length was 225 feet; beam, 44 feet; depth, 18 feet 6 inches; draft (aft), 17 feet 2 inches; speed (max.), 13½ knots; tonnage, 1990; battery, 18 guns; complement, 302 officers and men.

The following contemporary account of her launching has been found: "As she touched the water, Miss Lizzie Stringham, daughter of the Commandant of the Yard, broke a bottle of Connecticut River water across her figure head; Miss Carrie Downes, a bottle of Hartford spring water, and Lieutenant George H. Preble, a bottle of salt water, and thus she was nobly christened the HARTFORD."

She was commissioned on 27 May 1859 and on 25 June, with Captain Charles Lowndes in command and Flag Officer C. K. Stribling on board, proceeded to sea from Boston for a tour of duty in the East Indies where the United States kept a small squadron for the protection of American citizens and their property. She returned to the United States on 2 December 1861 and was immediately prepared for service in home waters and sailed from Philadelphia on 21 January 1862 as the flag ship of Rear Admiral David G. Farragut who was in command of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron. She arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi River on 20 February and on 11 March anchored off South West Pass. From 7 to 16 April she was preparing for the passage of Forts Jackson and St. Philip, below New Orleans. Bombardment of the forts commenced on 16 April and continued until the 24th when the HARTFORD with the rest of Farragut's fleet passed them and on the 25th engaged Chalmette batteries. At 1 P.M. of the same day HARTFORD anchored before New Orleans and on the 28th accepted the surrender of the city.

The next objective of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron, of which HARTFORD was flagship, was to reduce the Confederate defenses at Vicksburg, Miss., and Port Hudson and join the Western Flotilla under Flag Officer Charles H. Davis moving down from above. Late in June, Farragut assembled his fleet below Vicksburg determined to run past its defenses and on the 28th, supported by the Mortar Flotilla under Commander David D. Porter, he succeeded and on the first of July, Davis joined him with his gunboat squadron. This gain was only temporary however, and much hard fighting on land and water was in store before their control of the Mississippi became permanent by the capture of Vicksburg on 4 July 1863 and Port Hudson on the 9th.

After the opening of the Mississippi was accomplished and the Union flag was raised over Vicksburg and Port Hudson HARTFORD returned to New Orleans and on the first of August sailed for New York, arriving there on the 10th. After repairs on her were completed she returned south again on 3 January 1864 with Admiral Farragut on board and arrived at South West Pass

